



Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits

Within Reach

Spring 2024 | ISSUE 155



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Front cover star Charlie



Reach

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LimbPower & Reach Reunited



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Your Reach Story: Samantha Bradnock

Events

APR · 1st - 30th | Limb Loss & Limb Difference Awareness Month
 · 19th - 22nd | 18-25s Reach Retreat | Violet Fountain Farm, Devon

MAY · 4th | Kent Branch - Bowles Activity Centre
 · 18th | 3 Counties Branch | LimbPower Family Fun Day
 · 24th - 27th | Reach On the Beach
 · 25th - 26th | South Wales Branch Family Weekend | YHA Swansea
 · 25th | East Anglia Branch | Thetford Forest

JUN · 5th | Kent Branch | Play Cafe

JUL · 12th - 14th | Northwest Family weekend | Patterdale

AUG · 4th - 11th | Reach Activity Week (RAW) | Calshot, Southampton

OCT · 25th - 27th - Annual Family Weekend | Portsmouth

For details contact reach@reach.org.uk or your local branch coordinator



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Please add reach@reach.org.uk to your contact list.

Meet our Wonderful Branch Coordinators

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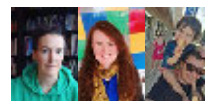
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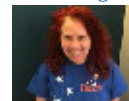
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Stay up to date

All event news is on our website www.reach.org.uk and facebook page www.facebook.com/reachcharity.

How YOU can help Reach!

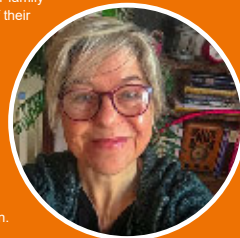
Know of a local venue, sports club or hall that would be perfect for a private meet-up for our Reach families? Or perhaps you're keen to help but can't commit to being a branch coordinator, no problem! Help your local Branch Coordinator by simply making that first contact with a venue or getting a quote for an event. Every little really is a BIG help. Don't underestimate your impact. Get in touch with your local Branch Coordinator or the Reach team at reach@reach.org.uk.

How-do-you-do?

I'm not sure about you but spring hasn't quite sprung yet in Devon! Despite the weather the daffodils and primroses are in full bloom, so I know it's coming soon! I also know that behind the scenes Reach Volunteers are cooking up a range of events for Reach families to enjoy across the UK and Ireland as summer nears. From Gala Dinners to Teddy Bear Picnics, the return of Reach on the Beach, this time a 3-day event in South Wales, thanks to Melissa and Sian, plus our first ever Reach Retreat for 18-25-year-olds, it's all going on!! Running seems to be a bit of a theme too. I've just posted off enough T-shirts for a whole family in Lincoln running this weekend, we've got 6 runners in training for the London Marathon in April, and we've just buddied up with LimbPower who have invited us to their family funday in May (you'll read more about this in Jen's article). They are sharing proceeds of their Marafun family fun run with us to spend on regional family weekends, this year in South Wales, next year, East Anglia. We are so delighted! Wherever you are in the world if you want to, you can get involved with the Marafun – turn to the back page to read more about it.

Another thing cooking right now which will be in full swing when you're reading this is Reach's HOW DO YOU DO? campaign, our contribution to Limb Loss & Limb Difference Awareness Month 2024. With the guidance and help of Reach Trustees, members of all ages, and Ambassadors we're creating video content to raise awareness across the month and a resource library jam packed with HOW DO YOU DO? videos which will go up online this year. A big thank you to everyone involved, especially the campaign creators: Emily, Steve, Colm, and Megan for making this happen.

As mentioned in Chris' report we are nearly there preparing our new Articles of Association for the consideration of our members. To find out more about the process we are undertaking visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changing-your-charitys-governing-document-cc38/charitable-companies-changing-your-governing-document> To get to this point our Trustees attended training, we created a working group, involved branch coordinators, and took queries and questions to our solicitor who specialises in charity law. She is now busy preparing the first draft of our new articles ahead of the next Trustees meeting in April. After that we would like to consult with you, and we would like to do it right. My role is to manage that process, not take any decisions in isolation. You, guided by the Board will vote at the AGM on Saturday 26 October 2024 whether to accept the recommended changes or not. The changes being recommended by the board will help Reach as a small national charity function more effectively and continue to put the needs of the members and community we serve first.



The consultation process:

In May we will publish the full proposal on our website, circulate it via email and post links to it on our closed Facebook group. We will run a series of 3 evening online forums, the first for Branch Coordinators so they can help spread the word and then two for members so they can meet with the Trustees and talk it through. In June we will hold an in-person meeting, for those who prefer a 'town hall' type meeting. We're thinking Birmingham might be good as it's sort of in the middle. To book onto any of the events below email reach@reach.org.uk or telephone: 0300 365 0078.

online Forum Dates:

- Tuesday 21 May | 7.30 - 9pm: Reach Branch Coordinators
- Wednesday 22 May | 7.30 - 9pm: Reach Members
- Tuesday 28 May | 6 - 7.30pm: Reach Members

open Meeting

- For members who would like to meet with the Trustees in person:
- Sunday 16 June 11am-12.30pm: Reach members

Reach AGM 26 October 24

Reach members invited to vote on adoption of a new set of Articles of Association. Members can participate in person or by proxy. To register for a proxy vote please contact the Reach Team email reach@reach.org.uk.

If you would like to feedback to the Trustees

on the proposal during the consultation period, please email articlesfeedback@reach.org.uk or write to me at our office address: Reach, Tavistock Enterprise Hub, Brook Street, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BN before Thursday 20 June to allow us time to collate your feedback for the Trustee meeting that weekend.

NB: If you would prefer to receive the proposal in the post please get in touch with me either by email: sarah-janel@reach.org.uk or by phone M: 07932 747 652 and I will make sure to get it to you.

Sarah-Jane
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Facebook: facebook.com/reachcharity

LinkedIn: Reach Charity Limited

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Registered charity in Scotland no.SC049805

We're three months into 2024 and it's joyful to think that this year we will celebrate 46 years of Reach.

Change, for an organisation like ours, is inevitable over such a period of time and change doesn't have to be a source of concern. In fact, change can shape and strengthen our development as a family support charity.

I have been a part of Reach for 33 years, along with my wife Rita since our son Colm was born in 1991. I started my journey as Ireland's Branch Coordinator, then became a Trustee for many years and served as Chair for 2 terms.

Reach Charity's greatest strength, in comparison with many other national charities, is its 18 Branches and their local volunteer Branch Coordinators. From the first time a parent learns of their new baby and their limb difference, they are put in contact with other local parents and attend local meetups with their children. They gradually learn of their children's abilities, their unique "problem solving" attitude from the earliest stages, their admirable determination to exceed the expectations of their peers and their success in doing so. Are you aware, for example, that it is our young adults who run our Communications through our magazine Within Reach, our social media, and our website? They also mentor the younger teenagers at Reach Activity Week and our Annual Family Weekend.

I consider myself fortunate to be surrounded by other talented, experienced parents who want to manage the ambition of Reach for the future. The Trustees are all volunteers, drawn from the Reach membership family, who have been elected to make sure that the charity is run in the interests of the people it is there to support. This includes making the necessary changes for the future development of Reach each year. We also have an exciting opportunity to involve and learn from our young adults who now take their place confidently in the world, accepting of their limb difference and succeeding in so many careers. Some of them play leading roles as Trustees on our Board, "giving back" to their childhood support group.

Our most recent Trustee meetings have been engaged with managing the changes necessary to future-proof Reach. To do this, we need to update our Articles of Association, our Constitution if you like, which is the governing document of Reach Charity. This also includes a recommendation from the board that we change the legal structure of the charity and make changes to our charitable objects to better suit our needs. We will ask you, our members, to support this proposal with a vote at the next Annual Family Weekend in October. We know how important it is to communicate clearly around these recommended changes. The Board of Trustees has planned an extensive consultation process to take place with members over the coming months. There will be several opportunities to meet and discuss the changes we're recommending.

Communication with the family members continues via our local branch meetups, our website, our various social media and of course in our members' magazine Within Reach.

If any member of the Reach family wants to communicate directly with the Trustees, they can check in with Ashley, our Business Support or with Sarah-Jane, our Charity Lead. They can even communicate directly with any of the Trustees to express ideas, ask questions, suggest initiatives or even to report problems.

We will keep you informed with regular communications leading up to the Annual Family Weekend in October. We need your loyal support to embrace the management changes and to advance our Reach Charity for the next 50 years.

Chris

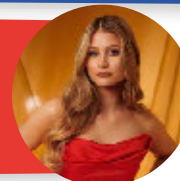
Chris Creamer
Reach Board of Trustees Chairman
chris@reach.org.uk

Meet your new Ambassadors

Mollie Pearce

Did you follow Mollie's journey on The Traitors?

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Jay Howard

You may have seen her on Married at First Sight!

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Limb POWER
Living life without limbs

Events

APR

13th | LimbPower Games and Exercise Event 2024
<https://www.limbpower.com/events/limbpower-games-2020>

MAY

18th | Family Fun Day and Manic MaraFun
<https://www.limbpower.com/events/mojomarafun>
31st | #ICan Family Camp
<https://www.limbpower.com/events/ican-family-camp>

JUL

6th | LimbPower Junior Games 2024
<https://www.limbpower.com/events/limbpower-junior-games-2019>

AUG

17th | Superhero Series
<https://www.limbpower.com/events/superhero-series>

Happy limb loss & limb difference awareness month! #LLLDAM

Did you know that April is Limb Loss & Limb Difference Awareness Month?

It's time to spread the word about limb loss and limb difference to empower those within our communities and to educate others. Join in with spreading awareness and representation! We've launched a special campaign and we're love for you to get involved!...



'How do you do it...'

During Limb Loss & Limb Difference Awareness Month, we will be sharing one video daily.

These videos will highlight how individuals from the limb difference community tackle physical tasks or handle social situations.

How do you... button your shirt, tie your shoe laces or deal with people staring?...

Please get involved!

Film a video in response to the question 'how do you do it,' then upload it to your account as a post or story, and tag us so that we can reshare and save for our 'resource library' to demonstrate the various ways we all approach tasks / situations.

** By taking part, you consent to allowing us to include your video in our 'resource library'

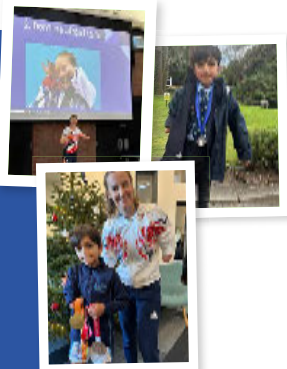
We are all unique and no answer will be the same - there is no right or wrong way.



Ambassador Claire Cashmore visited Luca's school

In December last year Luca Reese and his mum Kavita, with the help of Reach, got in touch with Clare Cashmore MBE, Paralympic swimmer and triathlete, and invited her to deliver a talk at his school Habberdashers in Elstree.

Clare spoke to years 1-5 in Prep about growing up being "different", the challenges she overcame and the golden opportunities that came her way. She was both enlightening and inspirational to both Luca and all of the other boys as seen by the solid half an hour of question time from all the boys! Clare's key messages of resilience, determination and perseverance throughout her journey and never giving up were warmly received by students and teachers alike. Luca was proud to assist in the slideshow of her achievements and most notably in the holding out of the gold and silver Paralympic medals for all to enjoy! Thank you very much Clare and best of luck for the Paris Paralympics later this year!



Rock Up Event

North London branch met at Rock Up! Watford for some climbing fun and softplay. The kids pushed themselves to new heights and had lots of fun!



Thank you Kavita!

"After 7 years as a BC for north London I've stepped down from my role to support the demands of my family, notably my boys aged 13 and 9. The way is open to a new North London branch coordinator which made me reflect on my time as one.

I started being a BC back in 2017 when Luca, my Reach child, was just 2 years old. I first went to a south London event where I was persuaded by the BC to take on the north London branch.

After attending several south London events and getting to know the fantastic parents and their children and gaining information and guidance from them and their BC, I could see how valuable the opportunities to meet were and so decided to take on the role.

Starting off with softplay, I organised events outdoors in parks, church halls, trampoline parks and climbing centres. Every time the important thing was to give time for parents of the children to connect and exchange advice and stories whilst watching their kids engage in a fun and often new activity in a safe space. They can heartwarmingly interact with each other, form friendships and celebrate their differences together. This has been so rewarding to see.

From a personal point of view I have seen Luca grow from these gatherings. He is challenging perceptions and unafraid to be seen and heard just like any other kid. A big part of that foundation for him and for me was growing up with Reach.

My highlights include running a 10k for Reach, speaking for them on occasion and Luca receiving the last Su Stokes award for 'bravery and owning his difference'. Most of all I remember the Reach children and grown up Reach adults who I was privileged to meet telling me their stories and how they valued these meet ups as well as the families who I helped start off on their journey with Reach, just like I experienced when I first joined.

Thank you Reach for the opportunity to be BC, it's been a rewarding and memorable experience and I look forward to remaining a part of Reach for years to come."

Kavita



Thank you Amber!

We're saying thank you and a fond farewell to one of our Reach Trustees Amber Thacker who was dedicated to Reach and ensuring that support remains available for the next generation.

We're always grateful for the time given to the Reach board and the commitment of our volunteer Trustees. Thank you Amber for your contribution to Reach and hopefully we'll see you at the next event!

If you've got specialist fundraising knowledge and are keen to help Reach's Board of Trustees the Team would love to hear from you. Please email your interest to Reach@reach.org.uk



Bionic arms on the NHS

In recent months friends of Reach, Open Bionics, shared exciting news about a boy called Harry, who became the first civilian in the UK to be fitted with an advanced bionic arm for free under the NHS.

Recently the NHS updated its regulations to allow for multi-grip technology to be offered nationwide, meaning amputees will no longer have to be prescribed old heavy hooks, but have access to advanced bionic technology for free.

Open Bionics have a waiting list of people who aren't able to afford the costs to cover for a bionic arm privately. "Our community has been lobbying for the NHS to update it's policy for nearly a decade, so to see Harry being the first civilian to be fitted with a Hero Arm under the NHS is monumental. The new policy enables Hero Arm users of 12 months to be eligible for a NHS trial of this tech. If they pass the trial, they get to keep the arm."



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Singing for Reach!

On the 17th of December, Pfiion Evans's local women's choir Lleisiau'r Cwm (Voices of the Valley) in Ammanford, South Wales hosted their annual charity Christmas concert and they dedicated it to Reach, with performances from the ladies choir, a male voice choir, brass band, local primary school and local opera singer.

A few families from the South Wales branch attended to show their support for the event which raised £1400.

"The concert went really well, it was a full house! We were able to speak to so many from the community and tell them all about Reach. My Dad was a well-known Postman there, so when people realised he was connected, their hands went deep into pockets for donations. I believe the total raised was around £1400 raised on the night!"



Elsie Hughes - Para Cycling's Rising Star



Dad and daughter, Paul and Elsie, and Lindsey Hollands, Elsie's Para Manager told Within Reach all about getting into cycling, the challenges they've had to overcome for Elsie to race competitively, and about how Reach members could begin their own journey into para cycling.

Paul, you must be so proud of Elsie. You have to be pretty confident to speak at the Kendal Mountain Festival. How did that come about?

Lindsey Hollands, Elsie's Para Manager at British Cycling asked me if Elsie would take part in the Kendal Mountain Festival. After we said yes, we did some research and found out that the Kendal Mountain Festival was a big deal... Too late to pull out now! So, Elsie just got on with it.

Elsie, how was it - was it nerve-wracking?

When I talked at Kendal Mountain Festival at first I was quite scared as all the other people were adults and seemed more confident, but I just ignored everything and tried to be my normal self. I talked about my bike set up and how I ride, also how I started my journey into cycling.

Paul, has Elsie always been into bikes? How did you know when it was time to pursue it?

Both Emma (mom) and myself, were Ironman athletes, so we liked bikes and riding. Elsie's brother, George, is 2 years older, he got a 'balance buddy' at an early age and passed this on to Elsie.

But Elsie was sat in the bike seat from a very early age, with her brother gliding by her side.

George went from balance buddy to bike with pedals BUT the bike had STABILISERS (big mistake) so with Elsie, we had learnt a lesson from George, we kept her on her balance buddy around 6 months longer but she went straight onto a pedal bike without stabilisers. Elsie rode an Islabike as her first proper bike. Made for kids, it's fit for purpose. Elsie jumped on and just pedalled off!

You mentioned the Hope Tech Academy and the 'Hope dual lever' they created, how did you come across them? What's different about their adaptation compared with others you've come across?

At an early age, it isn't a problem, one brake is fine, but Elsie was getting faster and harder to stop, so I had to try different braking systems, but the cable dual brake levers were normally for adults and too big for small hands. After a lot of trial and error we got Elsie a Islabike mtb, with a hydraulic braking system. With a Islabike you can put a lever on whichever side you require, so Elsie had two separate levers on one side, which worked a treat. It didn't look sexy, but it worked.

“ So, what have I learned... To problem-solve, ask advice from people in the trade and those who've done it before. ”



Once Elsie had grown out of that bike, we needed a small adult mtb, but with adult bikes, you can't do the same as an Islabike brake system. So, I needed to find something different. From talking to our local bike shop, they'd seen this dual braking system for one-handed riders.

We did a bit of research and decided to give it a go, Elsie's cycling club (Shibden Cycling Club) sponsored the brakes for Elsie, which aren't cheap, but it's a full braking system and worth every penny. We ordered these brakes and the local bike shop fitted them...

My wife says I'm not easily pleased...but these brakes are a game changer, they are mint and look very sexy (you can even choose your favourite colour 🍷).

Elsie, 3 years ago you gave a talk to the cycle group '41 Club' and raised funds for Reach... What's been happening since? It sounds like you're more passionate about cycling than ever?

Since then, I've started racing Nationals for Cyclocross as a first year Under 14 (age groups are two-year groups). I've started changing bikes within the race (when it's muddy or you've broken it) you can swap your bike every half lap if required, depending on conditions and the mechanicals. I'm able to swap bikes because Hope Tech have designed me a new handlebar attachment, so I can push a lever on my right-hand side and this releases the arm from the bike.

What have you learned about raising a child with an upper limb difference whilst supporting Elsie on this journey and what advice would you give to Reach parents who might have bike mad children?

As I've been involved in para-coaching and race organising, Elsie is an easy fix, in the bigger scale of things... As we sorted the brakes out with the Hope Duo Lever, I discovered another little problem to solve. So, we worked with our local prosthetic centre; Elsie's arm man (Asad) was very proactive, we started a very good relationship, we worked together to design and develop an arm and attachment for Elsie's riding.

After a bit of trial and error, Asad designed an arm and adaptor that add 360-degree rotation and it worked really well.

For some background, Elsie does Cyclocross, basically cross country running with a bike, which means jumping off and on her bike over a multi-lap course.

So, Asad designed an arm and it worked, for a time... With racing, components get worked hard, some components were wearing out very quickly. Also, Elsie's arm was popping out mid-race, and Elsie was losing time trying to get her arm back into the attachment (another problem to solve).

Elsie's moved up into the Under 14 age group, and completes at National Cyclocross events, which introduced another problem - riders need to swap bikes mid race, sometimes every half a lap, depending on mud and mechanical problems. So, it was back to Hope to ask for advice!

Hope said they'd help Elsie, as they want to do something for grassroots. So, they designed an arm attachment that fits to the handlebars with a lever on Elsie's right-hand side that releases the arm. Elsie can now swap bikes during a race; jump off her bike and shoulder her bike to climb steep hills, and do what every-able bodied rider can do, almost.

We've closed the gap on able-bodied riders in Elsie's age group. Hopefully, until the next little problem to overcome....

So, what have I learned... To problem-solve, ask advice from people in the trade and those who've done it before. Learn to fail and come back with a better product.

Don't be fobbed of with something that's not fit for purpose. Your child or athlete is the most important person in this process. And do everything you can to let your child achieve their dreams. And keep an open mind and think outside the box.

How did Elsie get involved with British Cycling?

I'm a club coach for Shibden, so I involved myself with paracycling as well as able-bodied cycling. I'm also a race organiser. There weren't any races after covid, so I started organising them and it's snowballed. At one of my able-bodied circuit races, British Cycling tagged a para race on the back of mine. At this race I met Lindsey and the para coaches. She must have liked my races as I organised two para races the year after, the rest is history as they say...

That sounds so exciting... Elsie, what's on the horizon? Have you got any events lined up?

I've been part of a programme with British Cycling called Limitless, which is to help para riders get into cycling, without feeling the pressure of not being good enough or not as good as others.

How does it work? Would you recommend other Reach members getting involved?

I think if you were wanting to start cycling, it would be the perfect chance to take and to not only make new friends, but also memories doing awesome things and overcoming challenges.



Lindsey, what's on the horizon for Elsie with British Cycling?

Elsie has been invited to participate in the new Para-cycling Development Centres. The sessions are specifically for riders with eligible impairments, who we hope will progress onto our talent pathways and/or will compete at national and international level in para-cycling. She will use these to have regular contact with our coaches and be able to develop her skills in road and track cycling. Next year we are excited to see her compete in the National Disability and Para-Series.

Speaking of talent pathways... Are there any para cycling 'try out' or talent events coming up in 2024?

British Cycling is always on the lookout for our next generation of talented para-riders and we regularly host Talent ID events for anyone with a passion for cycling and aspirations to be an elite athlete. You can find out more about upcoming events by contacting paratalent@britishcycling.org.uk

As Elsie said, the best way to get involved is to start cycling with your local Limitless Club. Limitless is British Cycling inclusive and accessible cycling programme, which is supporting riders with disabilities to get involved and progress through the pathway. Join a club, train and compete, and you could, like Elsie, be invited along to a para-cycling development centre.

You can find details of all our Limitless clubs at www.britishcycling.org.uk/limitless or by contacting: limitless@britishcycling.org.uk



Parent Corner with Jen & Joe

When did you find out about Marni's upper limb difference – before she was born or after?

We found out about Marni's limb difference at the 20-week scan. Not the quick in and out hospital day we expected.

How did you feel when you found out? (Some parents talk about needing time to process and come to terms with it all.)

I can still remember how kind the first sonographer was when she told us she was worried she couldn't see a left forearm. We were in shock, and we both had a good cry in the car whilst anxiously waiting to see consultant later that day. Meeting with the consultant was overwhelming. They explained the bone formation and possible reasons for this. We were then offered an amniocentesis. At the time, most of the information they gave us was not really sinking in. I do remember she mentioned 'the lady' from the sewing bee with one hand as she tried to reassure us! Gill is now one of the many people with a limb difference we follow online.

We knew that the baby would be just fine, but it still took a while to process it. Being pregnant and extra sensitive added to this, we were processing her difference when she was a newborn – not that we would want her any other way, we were just perhaps still coming to terms with it and wondering why.

It was difficult to tell people without getting emotional, and deciding whether to let people know before she was born or not. I hope Marni will have the confidence and pride to talk about her limb difference when she wants to.

Although we assumed Marni wouldn't need any extra treatment, we did feel quite alone in terms of not having any information from the hospital or health professionals, the word limb difference wasn't even used. They just reassured us she would be fine.



When did you discover the Reach community?

We did some Googling soon after we found out (maybe even the same day) and that's when we found Reach.

I remember posting on the Facebook page close to her due date asking if there was any advice or things to ask the hospital... All the positive responses made such a massive impact, thank you!



You celebrated Marni's first birthday in January, what have you learned about upper limb difference over the last year?

The challenges so far have mostly been overcoming the worry about peoples' responses to her difference and the challenges she may face, however, Marni amazes us every day, so far there's nothing she can't do! We know there will be more tricky moments to come but we are confident she will find her own way to conquer any challenge.

There is still a long way to go in terms of limb difference support, information and representation from health professionals and schools.

With the help of the Reach community and limb difference representation we continue to learn how unstoppable people with limb differences are.

We've learnt that we wasted a lot of time worrying about Marni growing up with a limb difference (but I guess that's part of being a parent either way!).



Welcome to Reach

Araya-Rose



Archie



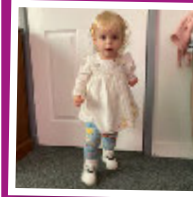
Arla



Connor



Etta



George



Georgina



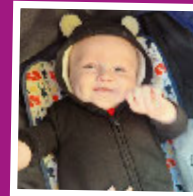
Hetty



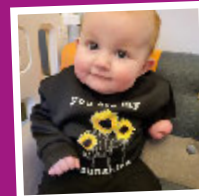
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Jackson



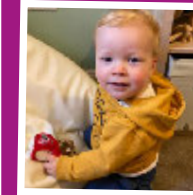
Luna



Martha



Otto



Owen



Sebastian



Tadhg



Make it Monthly

Did you know you can set up monthly donations to Reach via PayPal? Visit [Reach.org.uk](https://reach.org.uk), click on 'Donate', then select 'Make this a monthly donation' and follow PayPal's instructions.



Monthly Donations

£10 Heather Nash

Annette Gabbedey Goldsmiths £5

£58 Durray Zeb

Jonathan McGee £10

£100

Andrea Johnston
Please accept the money raised by the staff at Glasswells, Ipswich wearing their Christmas jumpers, we hope it goes towards making a difference for those children who need our support.

£1000 Opos Limited

St James Church Cambridge £180

£20 Lisa Dowell

Holy Trinity Church, Rolleston £100

£30 The Dean Close Foundation

Anita & Mike Smith £10

Fundraising & Donations

£570 Sandra

HFF Civil Engineering £420

£80 David Davies

John Moynihan £200

£1077

Laura Morgan took part in the South Wales Three Peaks Challenge which sees competitors trek 20 miles and climbed 5000 feet of ascent, and crosses over three prominent peaks around Abergavenny in Monmouthshire: Bloreng, Sugar Loaf and Skirrid.



'HOW DO YOU DO IT...!'

Reach **LIMB LOSS & LIMB DIFFERENCE** **#LLLDAM** **@reachcharity1**

Fundraising & donations for Reach

Did you know: you don't need to raise hundreds of pounds or run a marathon to fundraise for Reach.

We appreciate all donations and funds raised no matter how big or small. So even if you raise only £10. If every member raised only £10 that would go a very long way towards enabling Reach to continue the work and support it offers its members.

Help support Reach so Reach can support you. Thank You!

Ideas for fundraising



Running Events

Whether you're a first time runner or want to take on a marathon, we've got the challenge for you, join Team Reach!



Virtual Fundraising

If you are looking for ways to raise money online, here are some fun ways to fundraise - from the comfort of home!



Community Fundraising

Ideas of how to fundraise at school, with your clubs and in your work place, every penny counts!



Fundraise for your Birthday

Make your birthday extra special and ask for donations to Reach in lieu of gifts or cards.

Find out more about fundraising here: <https://reach.org.uk/fundraising/>

How to donate



Leaving a Gift in Your Will

Including a gift of any size in your will is a wonderful way to support Reach. Email reach@reach.org.uk to find out more



Via Paypal

PayPal Giving Fund passes on 100% of donations <https://tinyurl.com/4fbj9bnp>



Via Bank Transfer

Name: Reach Charity Ltd
Sort code 40-52-40
Account No. 00028547



Via 'Work For Good'

Flexible fundraising for businesses and charities. Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/34hjxmh8>

What is Reach?



Positive

Even in the darkest moments, we want Reach to be a ray of hope in our members' lives. We see the potential in all Reach children and celebrate their ability, never focusing on disability.



Supportive

We recognise that different families want different levels of support, and we tailor our approach to suit them. We're here to provide resources, support and practical advice; whatever our families tell us they need.



Inspiring

Our members are amazing and we shout about their achievements whenever we can. We share success stories and hero those 'wow' moments, big and small, to show families just how much our incredible children are capable of.



Community

Connecting families is a vital part of Reach's work and the bonds this creates is priceless. Whether it's at our family weekend, branch meetings or on our Facebook forum, we help members to build relationships that last a lifetime.

Even in the darkest moments, we want Reach to be a ray of hope in our members' lives. We see the potential in all Reach children and celebrate their ability, never focusing on disability.

Hand Surgery | A Parent's Guide

By Ruth Lester OBE FRCS

BSSH The British Society for Hand Surgery



Surgery of the hand and arm is part of an individualised treatment plan for your child. It is usually only a small part of your child's general developmental journey. The aim of all surgical procedures is to improve function and appearance, but it is not possible for surgery to restore a normal hand.

Other treatments which are non-surgical, such as splinting and orthotics may be more appropriate at certain times during your child's growth.

There are a huge variety of surgical procedures which may help your child, but they need to be individually tailored as every child is unique.

Hopefully, you will be referred to a specialist once your baby is born, but this may be later as the child grows. There is then a decision-making process about possible surgery which starts when you and your child first meet a specialist paediatric consultant hand surgeon and then decisions will be made often over a longer period of time.

At the first consultation you should be given the reason why this anomaly has occurred – but remember that the baby's hand is fully formed by about 6 weeks after conception so that any problem that occurred in the development of the upper limb happened before mum even knew she was pregnant!

Here is a list of dedicated children's hand clinics around the country which is held on the BSSH website - https://www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/childrens_hand_clinics.aspx

Your GP or paediatrician will be able to guide you to the right professional.

Do write down your questions before your appointment so you can remember them!

The key points to discuss with your surgeon are:

- How much will this improve my child's function and cosmesis. You may find it easier to think of this in the form of a ladder and ask how much improvement - as steps on a ladder - is likely to be achieved
- When is the best time for surgery for my child?
- Will a series of operations be necessary?
- What will the aftercare involve?
- Timing of surgical procedures

Some anomalies can require very early intervention: e.g. radial dysplasia may require splinting or soft tissue distraction, constriction bands causing fingertip oedema might need division, complex syndactyly of the border digits causing a bending of the shorter digits might need release.

However, the majority of surgical procedures can wait a little.

The best time for a surgical procedure is often between 12 and 18 months of age when the child is old enough to safely undergo an elective procedure under general anaesthesia. At this age, the child does not have much memory and is not frightened – even if you are!

Recovery from surgery is relatively quickly achieved and a surgical procedure is unlikely to impact on the child's general development. Many surgical procedures are best undertaken at this time so that the improved function develops quickly as the child grows.

A protective bandage will be worn after the surgery until the wounds are healed. A younger child will be less distressed when a bandage prevents movement. Removing a bandage is also relatively stress free in this age group.

It is always best to avoid the 'Terrible Two's' if possible because, at this age, there is very little understanding by the child and a lot of mobility!

Sometimes it is best to wait to see exactly how a child uses their hand as they naturally increase their ability to do things with their hands. But it is best to get operations over before school, so 3-4 years of age is often a good time. At this age, a child will understand simple concepts.

From the age of 7-8 years, a child will be able to understand the value of surgery - i.e. they can tell us what they find difficult and will need to be involved in the decision-making process. At this age they will co-operate with any therapies needed around the surgery. Their involvement will help to reduce any distress they may feel around having an operation and the admission to hospital.

Teenagers need to make the decision themselves with support from parents and surgeon.

2nd Opinions

The decision to ask for a 2nd opinion is very personal.

From a surgeons point of the view, there are many opportunities for discussion about the more complex and difficult cases with their colleagues around the country and abroad.

Some surgical procedures are 'tailor-made' for a specific situation and therefore by getting a second opinion, a different and confusing approach may be taken by a different surgeon.

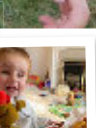
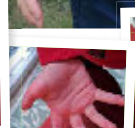
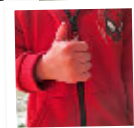
There is definitely no right or wrong decision with regards to surgery. Children will adapt extremely well and will become independent adults who contribute to society with or without a surgical intervention.

Surgery experiences

From Reach mum Rosie...

"Macsen was born with bilateral thumb hypoplasia: on his left he was missing the thumb completely, on his right he had an underdeveloped, unstable thumb and an extra floppy digit (grade 5 and 3b), as well as 4 'typical' fingers. When he was 18-months old he had pollicization on his left hand giving him a thumb and 3 fingers.

Recently in November 2023, at 4 years old, he had an 'on-top-plasty' performed on his right hand. His surgeon, Mr Boyce at the Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastics, said that he had only managed to speak to 1 surgeon who had performed a similar surgery, it's very rare and highly specialised! The best case scenario was that they could use the floppy nubbin, which had a good nail and pulp, and place it over the tip of the rudimentary thumb, giving a more standard appearance, at the same time stabilising the existing joints that were quite loose. The surgery was five hours long, the team had a rough plan but didn't know exactly what they would be able to do until they had a look inside, the floppy nubbin had a good blood supply and nerve, they couldn't detach and move it, they had to walk it up the inside of the thumb with its nerve and blood supply still attached. It went brilliantly and gave Mac a 5-finger hand with a more typical appearance. He will need a small revision surgery as some of the bones have failed to fuse entirely, but we are really happy with the result and the revision will improve his function even more."



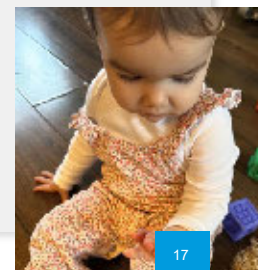
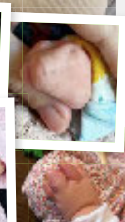
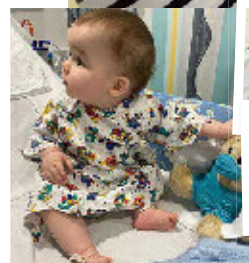
From Reach mum Elizabeth...

"Florence, who has recently turned 2 years old, has undergone two surgeries to date. The first at 10-months old, in January 2023, which took three and a half hours, and this was to separate her thumb. I've included a before and after photo.

The second was in December 2023, at 21-months old, which took four hours, and this was to separate her one large digit which has now given her three fingers and a thumb. Her third surgery will be later this year to separate her middle digit into two.

The anxiety leading up to the surgery and the recovery is really tough, it's mentally and physically draining and exhausting, but we without a doubt we would absolutely make the same choice again, and we will continue with the ongoing planned surgeries. Seeing Florence thrive with her new hand has been incredible and the surgery has truly changed her life in regard to her capabilities now."

You can follow Florence's parents, Michelle @micheybops and Craig @running4reach on Instagram, where they do lots of wonderful Reach fundraising!



Obstacles OFF the wall

"No matter how improbable it seems, there is always a way."

Interview with Matt Phillips

You're a three times World Champion Paraclimber... And now your focus is on Coaching and Route Setting... How important is it for climbing centres to be inclusive and instructors aware of different abilities?

I think the need for inclusivity in climbing is growing rapidly. As the sport reaches new audiences with its introduction in the Olympics, making sure that climbing walls and instruction in climbing is inclusive becomes more important. The way that climbing walls are currently set up is brilliant in some aspects but there is always room to improve. Most centres have a wide variety of different climbs at all levels which is great for those who come in to the sport with a physical disability as it allows them to feel included because even if they cannot complete a certain climb there'll be another climb of equal difficulty that they might find easier that requires different techniques.

Instructing within climbing is an area that still requires some additional work. I must stress that this is not due to discrimination of any kind, or intended exclusion, but rather the qualifications that allow someone to instruct climbing do not delve very deeply into how to approach physical disability when teaching climbing and this can often leave instructors struggling to adapt when confronted with a climber with a physical disability. More training and open discussion within the qualification framework would allow instructors to be more confident in how to teach people of all abilities.

Do you still compete?

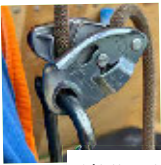
I have recently taken a step back from competing after over 10 years in various competitive sports to focus on other aspirations in climbing. Specifically route-setting which has become not only a passion but also a major part of my job within the industry. I continue to coach as well, specifically with promising young climbers.

Scenario: My child wants to climb but the climbing centre/wall doesn't know how to approach a limb difference? / Says they can't belay with a limb difference.

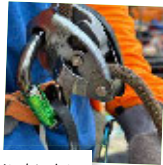
I've recently started to hear this more, and I feel that this comes from an influx of new instructors to the sport who have not yet had the time to build confidence and experience and have been taught a rather rigid way of teaching belaying.

As an instructor, more than most sports, you are dealing with high-risk situations where there can be the possibly of serious accidents, and therefore instructors rightly have to be cautious. However, there is no reason that I have come across that someone with a limb difference can't safely belay with a few adaptions. These are not equipment adaptions but mostly ensuring that you are using the right bit of kit.

What I would recommend is to encourage the instructor or wall to reach out to more experienced sources, all walls have a technical advisor, normally a very well qualified and experienced climbing instructor who hopefully will be able to aid the instructor in a session with how to proceed and give them the confidence to do so. I encourage a firm but understanding insistence that it is perfectly possible for more limb difference climber to belay safely.



A Grigr is an assisted braking belay device



What is it about climbing that you love?

Climbing for me is a sport that is driven by passion; it incorporates so many elements and so many different styles. There is no barrier to people with disability as there is an endless variety of climbs, if there is one that you can't do there is another one no less difficult that will challenge you but which ultimately you can do.

There is no glass ceiling for people with disabilities and that is something I love about climbing. I also have to mention the community. I have participated in many sports at all levels and never have I found a community so open and welcoming; it doesn't matter where in the world you go, if you are a climber you will be able to find friends under a rock somewhere. My greatest memories of climbing aren't winning competitions or climbing hard climbs, it's the people I've met and the beautiful places that I have been.

Can you belay safely with a limb difference?

You absolutely can. This is something that I spent many years figuring out and perfecting in large part due to my coaches who were always brilliant and open minded to adapting how things should be done as most people in the industry are. I think it would first be helpful to cover the basics of what we are doing when we belay as understanding this helps to make it easier to see how to safely adapt it.

When we belay we are keeping the rope attached to the climber tight and secure so if they fall they will be safely caught. In order to do this, we use a belay device, normally a friction plate that is designed to reduce the amount of weight that we have to control with our hands so we are not holding the climber's full weight. When keeping this rope tight we pull the rope down into the device and up on the other side. Once the rope has passed through the device it is called the dead rope. It is crucial that we always have a tight grip on this dead rope as if we let go and the climber falls the rope will slip through the device and the climber will fall all the way.

This crucial bit is what all the different methods of belaying are about; ensuring that there is always a firm grip on that rope. This can be where an instructor can become confused as the normal belaying method often call V to knee 1,2,3 requires two hands to work and most instructors are not as aware of other belaying methods. The method I use is called tunnelling, and when done safely, is just as effective as the 'normal' method but can be done with one hand. It does however require a strong understanding of the principle to never let go of that dead rope and can often be mistrusted by instructors not familiar with it.

The use of a different belay device apart from the friction plate can also help. These are called assisted-braking devices (ABD), and whereas on the friction plate, the hand on the dead rope must always be tensed with an ABD the hand while always remaining on the dead rope can be relaxed which make the tunnelling method easier. The most common ABD is called a Grigr and almost all climbing walls will have a number of these devices.



Should we try different harnesses?

For all climbers, apart from very young ones, the regular sit climbing harness will require no adaption as it simply sits on the waist and therefore is unaffected by a limb difference. For those who are very young a full body harness might be required. Depending on the limb difference some extra care might need to be taken but most full body harness should still be perfectly functional if fitted properly.



Matt demonstrating belay device



Matthew and Ivan, on his Family Weekend Climbing auction prize session at Castle Climbing Centre, London.

Matt, what other common queries do you get from parents or adults about limb difference climbing?

Most of the questions I get around climbing with a limb difference are to do with how the climber should climb. The beauty of climbing is that while there are certain techniques you can learn there is no fundamentally wrong way to climb and I always encourage a climber to simply climb and figure it out on their way. I find it endlessly fascinating seeing how limb difference climbers adapt and climb as it is almost always so varied and different. I couldn't possibly prescribe a single method or way for limb difference people to climb - experiment discover and explore how you are able to move, that is the most enjoyable part of the sport. No matter how improbable it seems there is always a way.

Are there resources that people can point instructors to if they're not confident they can help?

While there are unfortunately no official guidelines for instructors on how to teach for limb differences yet, there are a number of groups and individuals who are knowledgeable and always willing to assist. I've included a few below including my email as I am always happy to help resolve any issues and liaise with climbing walls on the matter.

matt@matthewphillips.me.uk



info@grtcollective.co.uk - (A southwest based adaptive climbing charity run by James Rudge a member of the GB para-team and limb difference athlete)

ukparacimbingcollective@gmail.com

Jay Howard

Championing her community

Married at First Sight TV Star Jay Howard opens up about her time on the show, being bullied at school, what representation means to her and why she is excited to fly the flag for Reach as an ambassador.

So, for members who might not know you and for your introduction, we'll begin with a touch of 'Blind Date': Who are you, what do you do and where do you come from?

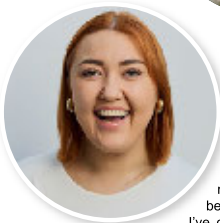
"My name is Jay Howard and I'm best known for appearing on the latest series of hit Channel 4 show, Married at First Sight UK. I'm very proud to be the first disabled cast member to appear on the series – it's been a great honour flying the flag for the limb difference and wider disabled community – and I'm from Accrington in Lancashire."

If you had to describe yourself in three words what would they be?

"Independent, confident, open-minded."

You were on Married at First Sight... What made you apply?

"I wanted to find my person. I've struggled with relationships in the past, and I thought going through the experiment would be the perfect way to find love and to work on myself. It has really helped my growth and I have learnt to fully love myself, which I couldn't say before the experience. Unfortunately, I didn't find the one – but I did have an incredible time and made memories and friends that will last a lifetime."



What has life been like since MAFS?

It's been one whirlwind of a year, emotions have been a mixture of highs and lows, but in the best way possible. I've really come to terms with how to be fully confident within myself and I've completely changed as a person because of the experiment. I've learnt a lot and feel honoured to be championing my community. I used to work in an office full time and now I'm pursuing my dreams, and off the back of the show I'm being offered some incredible opportunities which I'll be forever grateful for.

I believe you were you born with your upper limb difference, did your parents know before?

My parents were completely unaware of my limb difference until I was born, so it came as a surprise to them. It was a lot more uncommon 32 years ago for parents to find out before giving birth as they didn't have the same technology as they do now. The nurse handed me to my mum and said, "She's lost an arm along the way."

How did your parents find navigating the first few years? Did they know about Reach? Have any support. If not, do you think it would have changed anything for them?

My parents really struggled at first. They had never met or seen anyone like me before and thought it was going to be really tough to raise me. My mum had the support from my grandparents but that was it really. I think if she had known more at the time things wouldn't have been so hard for her. She didn't really have any guidance on what she could do to help me etc. however, she found out about Reach when I was a child and did get some support from the charity – including arranging for us to meet another child with a limb difference. I didn't realise there were other children with limb differences, for years I never met another person that was the same as me.

How did you find growing up with a physical difference? Did you have to deal with bullying?

I found it fine growing up in terms of doing day-to-day tasks. I had my family's support and that's all I needed. I did get bullied as a child at school, kids can be mean, especially with name calling. I got chucked in bins at secondary school and tied to a fence once and wasn't able to free myself, my mum had to drive around and spotted me from the road. Those experiences have made me stronger as a person throughout my years growing up, so even though it shouldn't have happened I'm grateful in a way because it's made me who I am today and taught me that the world can be cruel but that there are also incredible people that will love and support you, like my amazing group of friends who would always stick up for me no matter what.



Seeing upper limb difference being represented means a lot to the Reach community. I certainly didn't see anyone like me growing up, did you?

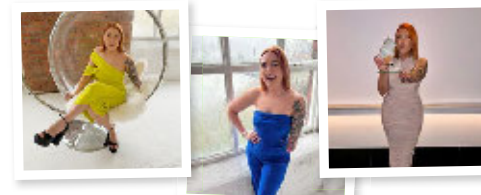
No, I think in total I met 1 or maybe 2 people like me and that took years. Meeting them was when it hit me – that I was different to everyone else. As a child I always saw myself as the same as everyone because I didn't meet anybody else like me and my family didn't treat me any different. I think if I had met more people like me growing up it would've been really beneficial, having others to relate to, know how I was feeling and understand my life experiences. I felt sometimes growing up that nobody really understood me.



With awareness and representation in mind, what does representation mean to you and why do you think it's important to see different bodies on TV, in sport, across all industries?

I think it needs to be seen more often as it's educating others on how people with limb differences live life, and how hard it can be for us. Also, it encourages mindfulness and empathy, understanding others' feelings and being aware that we are capable and just do things differently.

I want to help people gain confidence in themselves like I have over the years and for them to feel like they belong in this world. In terms of social media, we live in a society where everyone has a certain expectation of how to fit in, whereas real life isn't like that. Often young people are so involved in how their peers perceive them, how they look on social media and trying to be like the influencers who edit and alter all of their photos or spend thousands of pounds on surgery. I think it's sad to see the world like this and more representation will hopefully teach them what's actually important and what matters in life.



What advice would you give to your teenage self now?

Carry on, don't give up, keep your chin up and you know who you are – don't listen to narrow-minded people. Being different is the best way to be. Everyone has their differences, if you were normal it would be boring.

There are lots of discussions between parents and Reach adults within Reach about 'how to talk about upper limb difference' – what do you say to anyone who asks? And have you always found it easy to talk about it?

I'm very much an open book and I'm always happy to answer any questions, even the awkward ones. I encourage anyone to ask me anything they like without fear of judgement, as long as they're being respectful. If people don't ask they'll never know an honest answer. I do understand that some people can get offended and that not everyone sees it in the same way but I'm very much open-minded and feel that I can see these situations from different perspectives. I just explain to people and tell them the truth, it takes a lot for me to get offended by peoples' questions or comments. It's about educating people and I think that's really important.

Why did you want to become an Ambassador for Reach?

I want to help people see their worth and be brave and confident in this world we live in. I'm very passionate about giving back to society, helping kids and young people and raising as much awareness for the limb difference community as possible. I never had that growing up and the support network was very different to what it is today. Times have changed so much and I would never want someone to feel the feelings I did growing up and not knowing where to turn and who to speak to. I'm proud to be a disability advocate and cannot wait to get started in my role as ambassador for Reach. It's going to be a really cathartic and humbling experience for me to be able to give back to a young generation of people that are just like me. Even if I only made a difference in one person's life, I would be very happy – but the goal is to support and promote our community and the charity and fly the flag high and proud for all things limb difference.



From Faithful to Ambassador

Introducing... Mollie Pearce, your new Reach Ambassador. You may recognise Mollie from the TV show *The Traitors*, where she graced our screens as a devoted Faithful right to the final. Seeing upper limb difference represented on the shows we watch can encourage healthy conversation, helps to educate and inspires inclusion. But what about matters around mental health; Within Reach speaks to Mollie about her family's experience of Reach, how she navigates the positive and negative sides of social media and about her most empowering moment.

We loved watching you on *The Traitors* Mollie! Seeing upper limb difference being represented and having people who look like us on the screen means a lot to the Reach community. I certainly didn't have any role models growing up, did you?

I'm from a small town outside of Bristol and never really saw anyone with a limb difference. I think I was about 16 when I saw a model in Primark with a limb difference. It changed my life and made me want to put myself out there!

You've spoken courageously about your journey through illness and wanting to spread awareness of upper limb difference... Have you always been happy to talk about your hand?

I was always super outgoing growing up however did often find myself hiding my hand in photos or when I met new people. I had such amazing friends and family that never made me feel different. I was about 16/17 when I started modelling and started to embrace my limb difference.

How did your parents find out about your limb difference, before you were born or after?

I was born with my limb difference and my parents found out at the 20-week scan. It was hard for them both and they didn't know where to turn to for support. They went back at 24-weeks for other scans and tests that didn't show up any other problems. They offered them a termination of the pregnancy.



Did you know about Reach growing up?

Yes, I grew up going to Reach events. My parents found out about the charity through a friend. Reach really helped my parents and speaking to other parents with children who have limb differences helped them see there is light at the end of the tunnel. They loved seeing the other children doing well and succeeding.

Did you ever struggle with bullying at school?

I had a great friendship group in school and was never bullied. My hand never affected me much and honestly I hardly noticed it. I had a few nasty comments throughout the years but nothing crazy. Having a big brother in the school also helped.

Navigating the teenage years can be hard with a physical difference, I know I struggled at times, have you had any tough moments you recall that now you can look back on and feel differently about?

I used to hide my hand in photos growing up but mostly I was open about it, especially once I knew someone. I remember once I'd been friends with someone for months and they didn't even know I had one hand! [Hahaha!!!!]

What about dating or meeting guys growing up? Actor Melissa Johns has talked in the past about boys being less mature at 18. (I would agree! Lol!)

Growing up and meeting guys my mum always said I had a head start, if someone didn't like me because of my hand, they weren't worth my time anyway. Overall, I've not had too many problems however, I've never been on a blind date or anything. If someone doesn't like my hand, I wouldn't want to be with them anyway. It doesn't change who I am and the person I'm with should love me for me.

Differences can also embolden us to speak out, what has been your most empowering moment?

My most empowering moment was probably in *The Traitors* when I opened up about having a limb difference and a stoma bag. To open up on a show and reach that audience was such an achievement. I loved the missions as it showed my hand doesn't hold me back.

Do people ever ask you about your upper limb difference?

People don't often ask but I don't mind at all! If people are genuinely interested and kind it's not a problem.



Social media is a wonderful thing, but it can also be a platform for negativity. We understand it can be a tough world to navigate for the Reach teens. Have you had any bad experiences and how do you protect yourself from the negative side of social media?

After the show I experienced a lot of hate, and I did let it get to me for a couple of days. However, I also experienced so much love and so many messages from people saying I have helped them feel seen. There are always going to be people who don't like something you're doing and a lot of the time it's down to jealousy. Just remind yourself who you are, the people who hate don't know you!



I'm sorry to hear you struggled with such negativity after the show, how did you deal with that?

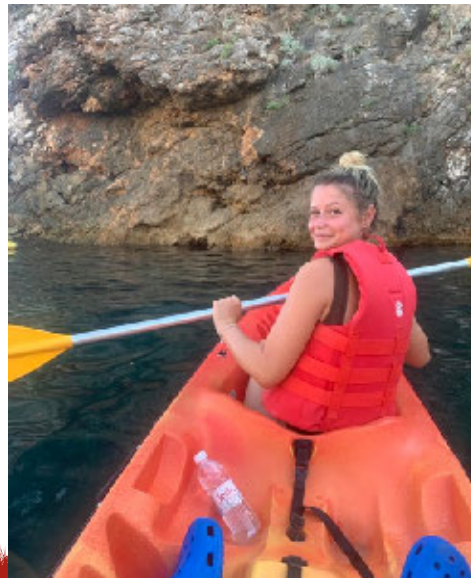
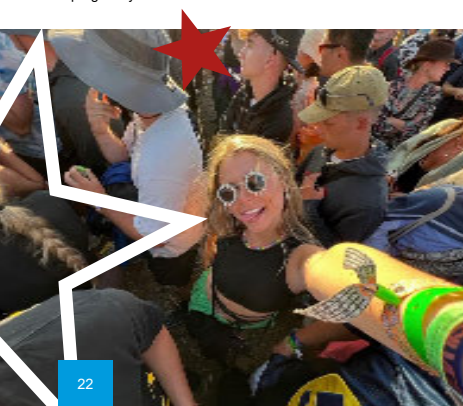
Honestly, I sort of just avoided the comments and didn't look for the first couple of weeks. After that I realised there were so many lovely comments as well and the hate was mostly from troll accounts. I surrounded myself with my family who know and love me which helped a lot. When receiving hate online you must remind yourself it's just 'keyboard warriors' and they don't know you as a person so what they are saying is a lie. A few weeks after the final [of *Traitors*] I went through my comments and deleted the negative ones which felt super empowering. I have also now blocked certain words from my comments.

Good for you! With awareness and representation in mind, what does it mean to you... Do you think it's important to see different bodies on TV representing all industries and sports?

I think seeing representation on all platforms normalises all bodies and differences. I think it helps to make us feel seen and heard. It encourages people to embrace their differences - do not hide them!

So, why did you want to become an Ambassador for Reach?

Reach has been a part of my whole life and it's always a place that made me feel safe and seen. I used to look forward to Reach events so much growing up so I could see other children like me. I think it's so important to keep this going for others and to show them their limb difference won't hold them back! It's also such a great support for parents who have a child with a limb difference. I know my parents found it super scary and lonely before they found Reach and it gave them so much confidence that everything was going to be okay. It's also a chance to celebrate our differences and come together as a community.



Reach & LimbPower Reunited

By Jen Jamieson



As many of us will remember, London 2012 was a wonderfully exciting, inspiring time for British sports, and the Paralympics and our amazing Paralympians were centre stage.



Who can forget Jonnie Peacock winning the men's T44 100m race, or Hannah Cockcroft's double triumph. In fact, the London 2012 Paralympics was described as 'the greatest Paralympics ever' and had a huge impact on the changing attitudes and perceptions towards people with disabilities (1). This is something, as a nation, we are extremely proud of. But as a region, our involvement in the Paralympics goes back much, much further.

If you have ever driven into Buckinghamshire, you may have noticed that the welcome sign says 'The Birthplace of The Paralympics.' As the mother of a child with a physical disability, and Reach branch coordinator for Three Counties - Bucks, Beds and Herts, this always makes me feel a little sense of pride. So why is Stoke Mandeville Stadium in Aylesbury considered the birthplace of the Paralympics? My family and I visited the stadium to find out.

The National Paralympic Heritage Centre, located within the stadium grounds, is full of fascinating information and artefacts documenting the creation and the evolution of the Paralympic Games. My family and I are so grateful to all the volunteers we chatted to at the museum - including Steve Lowe - a National GB Disability athletics squad member - and Anita Templar - a disability sports consultant who works with children and young people with disabilities.

The story of the Paralympics begins with Professor Sir Ludwig Guttmann, a surgeon who specialised in spinal injuries, who first

came to Britain as a Jewish refugee in 1939. He ran a treatment centre for people injured in the Second World War. His style of treatment was revolutionary; introducing physiotherapy as a form of rehabilitation to help with patients' physical and mental wellbeing. These activities, like archery and wheelchair netball, soon became competitions and evolved into the International Stoke Mandeville Games and eventually the Paralympic Games. The Games started in 1948 but the first official Paralympics wasn't until 1960, in Rome, Italy. The event has grown and grown over the decades to become

the world's third biggest sporting event (2). And last year, after celebrating the 75th anniversary of the 1948 Stoke Mandeville Games, it was announced that the Paralympic Flame will be created in Stoke Mandeville ahead of each Paralympic torch relay from the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games onwards. (2)

To celebrate this amazing history, Three Counties and the whole of the Reach community are really excited to be reigniting our partnership with LimbPower, a fantastic organisation, and one of the seven National Disability Sports Organisation including

WheelPower, the owners of Stoke Mandeville Stadium, who promote disability sport and the pathway to the Paralympics. LimbPower supports amputees and individuals with limb difference and their families to engage in physical activity, sport and the arts. LimbPower host a large variety of virtual and in-person programmes and events throughout the year, and the first event that we will be joining is happening this May.

“His style of treatment was revolutionary; introducing physiotherapy as a form of rehabilitation”



18th May - The Family Fun Day at Stoke Mandeville Stadium - is an extraordinary event crafted with love for families embracing limb differences. The day includes a variety of events for the whole family, including the Manic Marafun - something we hope the whole of the Reach community will join, whether you can attend the fun day or join virtually - and the Teddy Bear Picnic and BBQ - an event for under 7s.

Manic Marafun - A Symbol of Determination

Embrace the spirit of determination in our annual Manic Marafun, where we collectively aim to complete 10 marathons. Run, walk, swim, scoot, or push a mile in your style, all while raising funds to support the continuation of this fabulous event. It's a testament to the resilience and collective spirit of our community—how many laps of the stadium can you conquer?

Reach members are invited to join either the Manic Marafun at Stoke Mandeville Stadium or virtually at home and complete as many miles in their own style as they like, or simply come along and enjoy the day <https://www.justgiving.com/page/manic-marafun>

6th July - The LimbPower Junior Games is an annual sports event specifically designed for children and young people with limb impairments providing an opportunity for children and young people to participate in various sports and activities, including wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, athletics, swimming, and many others. The event aims to promote inclusion, confidence, and physical well-being among young people with limb impairments, while also fostering a sense of community and support. The Games provides children with the opportunity to learn new skills, make friends, and enjoy the benefits of being physically active. The LimbPower Junior Games play a vital role in empowering young people with limb impairments to lead active and fulfilling lives.

- 1) <https://www.paralympic.org/london-2012>
- 2) <https://www.paralympic.org/news/paralympic-flame-be-created-stoke-mandeville-all-future-paralympic-games>

“You should go because you get a goody bag!”

Testimonial

3 Counties member, Isobel, speaks fondly about the LimbPower events they've attended as a family, with her Reach son, James.

"We have attended several LimbPower events, particularly the LimbPower Junior Games and the LimbPower fun days, both based at Stoke Mandeville Stadium with all its Paralympic heritage. The Junior Games is normally more structured: the children are allocated to a group and rotate round different activities such as archery and athletics. The Fun day is less structured and has had a range of fun activities such as a soft play bus, a climbing wall and face painting, as well as different bikes to try.

The events have given James the opportunity to try lots of sports he wouldn't otherwise have tried as well as other activities such as a soft play bus (he's quite sad he's grown out of that now!). One year we had some useful advice from the Swim England team about using a pull buoy instead of a float which might be easier to hold on-to in the pool.

James always has a lot of fun trying all the sports and I think it's also really valuable for him to meet other children and adults with limb difference. It's good that he knows he's not the only one who doesn't have 10 fingers and toes.

I feel very lucky to have these events so local to us - we've met families who have travelled for hours to attend them.

We also came across the Arctic Junior Paratriathlon through LimbPower which took place in Chesham. James and his brother were very proud of themselves for having a go at this."

James says:

"At the LimbPower Junior Games you get to try lots of different sports adapted for people with limb differences. My favourite is wheelchair basketball because you get to try a sports wheelchair and they go really fast! You should go because you get a goody bag!

At the LimbPower Fun day you get to try loads of different adapted bikes - my favourite was the one where you drive it with your hands instead of your feet. You get to see lots of different people from all around the UK."



Samantha Bradnock

Samantha has been part of Reach since she can remember; she knows just how special the bonds made at RAW can be and despite facing obstacles on the way, is proof that if you want something in this world, you will find a way.

Thank you for chatting with us, tell us a bit about you...

My name is Samantha, I'm 26 years old and I'm a midwife. I was born in Devon but now live in Hampshire with my partner.

How long have you been a Reach member?

I have been part of Reach since I was about 2 years old. My mum was referred to Reach in 1998 when I was only a few months old.

What's your fondest Reach memory?

Meeting all my best friends at the Reach camps. This was the best week of my whole year!

For those who don't know you... How did you get into Midwifery?

I wanted to be a midwife for as long as I can remember and have always had a fascination about birth. I applied naively at 17 years old in sixth form and was offered a place! All went very well until an occupational health appointment left me feeling very disappointed - I was told I wouldn't be able to be a midwife, I'd need two hands as babies are slippery!! I was young and accepted defeat and went on to study a different course at a different university for a year. Midway through the year I decided not to give up on my dream... I contacted the lead midwifery lecturer and, after a phone call, was transferred onto the course! I then qualified 3 years later with absolutely no issues.

When did you qualify and how is it going?

I've been a qualified midwife coming up to 4 years now - I qualified back in July 2020 - how time flies! I've recently moved from my previous role on Labour Ward and running the Antenatal Day Unit to a slightly different role in the community. I've always enjoyed looking after families who may face adversity themselves, so now I work in a continuity-of-care role in the community where I caseload a small number of women. These women are predominantly vulnerable (for example teenage mothers or mothers who don't have English as their first language) to ensure that they receive the same level of care as everyone else.



What has been the biggest learning curve for you in your role?

I trained and have only worked at one hospital where I am lucky enough to have the most supportive colleagues. I don't find the parts of the job people would expect hard! I can do everything clinically everyone else can do, the hard part is the pressures of the NHS...

Do people ask you about your upper limb difference? If so, how do you prefer to talk about it?

Considering I touch a pregnant person's tummy about 10 times a day, I've only been asked about 3 times about my hand and a handful more have mentioned it because they know someone who also has a limb difference! If someone asks I will tell them, but if not I don't see that it's something I need to tell people. Everyone has differences, even if they're not immediately visible and I actually think it helps women open up to me as they can see the diversity around them.



That's really special, do you think your difference has given you another level of empathy that helps you to connect with people?

I've never really thought about it like that but potentially yes, I do feel like I build a rapport with these families easily.

What advice would you give to a Reach teen dreaming of studying midwifery or a medical profession?

Don't let someone else dictate what you can and can't do! We are all very sensible people who know our own limitations and should be the ones to explore that. There is not a single thing I cannot do as a midwife. Yes, I may do some things with a slightly different technique or ask the appropriate colleague to assist, but this hasn't stopped me carrying out my role.

Are there any questions they should be asking course-providers about support?

I think just being really open and honest from day one of an application. Asking universities if they've had students in the past with differences and how they've supported them is a good place to start. Many of my lecturers asked how they could support me but it's hard to know until you get stuck in.

We've got something unique to give

By Max Swincoe



I've written before about self-limiting beliefs and feelings of imposter syndrome, when at certain times in life we perhaps don't consider ourselves equipped or capable, or perhaps worthy of even 'being in the room.'

For me, on many occasions I've found it easy to walk into that 'room' and consider myself less than everyone else, as though I'm already starting at a disadvantage. Making that drive to prove myself even stronger and taking everything I see at face value. A person in a uniform, they're automatically promoted to Top Dog. Upon hearing someone's job title, they must be the most intelligent one here, or after meeting the oldest person there, unintentionally disregarding them. But how can this be. I know what it is like to be underestimated. To be the person with a disability in the room and have assumptions made unconsciously about my capabilities. Yet, we all do it, and this limits us, and it limits the communities we are a part of because we don't see peoples' true worth and we downplay our own.

Our worth is not defined by our job title, uniform, or disability, but by our actions, character and lived experience.

Our worth is not defined by our job title, uniform, or disability, but by our actions, character and lived experience. There is no tick list of achievements that make you worthy to be seen. It's what you give and how you give it.

I've come to realise that vulnerability is a power

Imagine if instead of feeling like the smallest in the room, we stepped forward with conviction to play our part, offer our knowledge, and have confidence in what we have to bring to the table.

I have always felt that having a physical, visible disability, has given me a level of empathy that differs from those who haven't. This is a quality that I have considered more closely of late, as an asset. I may not be the most knowledgeable, or the most experienced in whichever team I am working with but I can bring empathy, compassion and understanding that perhaps another cannot.

However, with being empathic, I've discovered too that I tend to 'wear my heart on my sleeve' and I've felt at times this was a negative characteristic. That perhaps I give too much of myself, investing in friendships, groups, situations wholeheartedly and then regretting it when I feel exhausted and empty. But I've come to realise that vulnerability is a power, not a weakness, and it's a great leveller; it strips away the titles, the awards or status. It's basic, it's human; being vulnerable helps us to connect with people on a deeper level, to create honest and open relationships and work better with others. It keeps our heart open to learn and grow. And yes it can be exhausting and terrifying but it can also be wonderful.

So, Reach friends and fellow limb different members, the next time you enter a strange and scary room full of 'accomplished,' 'successful' or 'able-bodied' people and imposter syndrome rears its ugly head, try to think instead about what you have to give that room. Remind yourself that most of them are probably feeling the same doubt for their own reasons, and remember that you can bring everything that your lived experience has equipped you with. That might be light and kindness, lateral thinking and problem-solving, or it may be a strength in your vulnerability that you've come to embrace that will disarm and humble those around you.



MANIC MARAFUN

FUNDRAISING FOR REACH AND LIMBPOWER



Wherever you are in the world,
you can join in the fun!

“

LimbPower and Reach, pillars of support and empowerment, have come together to champion and celebrate the limb different community.
- Kara Reble, LimbPower

”



Whether you're a seasoned marathon enthusiast or a first-time fun-runner, there's a place for you in this adapted event!

With only 1 mile to complete, Fancy a bit of moonwalking, skipping, running, pushing, shooting or perhaps a gentle stroll? The choice is yours, and the possibilities are endless!

Funds raised will go towards Reach on The Beach - South Wales & next year an Adventure weekend in East Anglia!

WHERE: Stoke Mandeville Stadium OR virtually

WHEN: Saturday, May 18th 2024



SIGN UP

For more info and to sign up,
email ashleyb@reach.org.uk